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ABSTRACT

The theoretical model of values presented in this paper differs from the Rokeach model, which assumes that the hierarchic order among the values in each individual's system is relatively stable. The hypothesis of the value model presented here is that value priorities change consonantly with the perceived expectations of situations. To test this hypothesis, 200 undergraduates were divided into five groups. Each of the four test groups was provided with an imaginary situation in which the test takers were to place themselves while responding. The situations were as follows: a worker in a government agency assigned to suppress a protest movement, a member of a protest movement against the government, a person living in a state of peace and prosperity, or a person living under the threat of war by a foreign invader. The fifth group, the control group, was not provided with an imaginary situation. To measure the value systems, a modified version of Rokeach's value test, Form D, was used. Differences between the control group and the group in the situation of peace and prosperity were minimal. Marked differences occurred between the other groups. The results of the study suggest that individuals do reflect a decision-making process in which they reorder values according to priorities in preparing to cope and adjust within the situation. (MKM)

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Toward a Heuristic Theory of Values

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I chose the title, "Toward a Heuristic Theory of Values," for two reasons. First, I believe that people in communication research lack a substantial theory (or theories) which generates ongoing investigation into the nature of values. Second, people with our orientation toward human interaction and influence should study values as variables which respond to communication and as intervening variables through which behavior and judgment can be influenced. Values are important in human action because they serve the individual cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.[1] Emphasizing the centrality of values in human conceptualization, Richard Weaver concludes that "it is the nature of conscious life of man to revolve around some concept of value. So true is this that when the concept is withdrawn, or when it is forced into competition with another concept, the human being suffers an almost intolerable sense of being lost. He has to know where he is in the ideological cosmos in order to coordinate his activities."[2] This conception of value goes beyond the often used notion that values are nonlogical and solely emotional.[3]

Two fundamentally different approaches to values pervade rhetorical communication literature. First, emphasizing terminal values, the "sermonic" approach[4] suggests that the communicator (1) should discover the essential values needed by people who are confronted with certain choices and who lack sufficient "moral" guidance and (2) should prescribe sermonically, as an advisor, the values best suited to high moral action. This viewpoint affirms the humanistic heritage and re-

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sponsibilities of rhetoric but fails to suuply a theoretical model sufficient to guide and foster research into the influence of values upon judgment, choice, and behavior.

A second perspective, based primarily on instrumental values, emphasizes values as motives and reflects the assumptions of Kenneth Burke's theory of identification. Accordingly, when associated with these salient values, actions and ideas are made acceptable to receivers. A theoretical weakness results in this perspective from attempts to account for how values influence behavior. For instance, some theorists in this vein use values to characterize humans by using the central value to which individuals adhere. We thus have "freedom lover" or "economic person."[5] This theoretical perspective presents little heuristic possibility and runs the risk of dead-end efforts leading to lengthening lists of values as we have lengthy lists of motives. A variation of this approach is to assume, as Henry E. McGuckin does, that the presence of salient values is so powerful that "even the most transparent identifications with basic values are effective."[6] Redding and Steele have provided sophisticated analysis of this perspective.[7] As helpful as such studies are, they fall short of establishing meaningful research models and paradigms; they fail to fully explain how values are used cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively.

My purpose in this paper is to explore the ramifications of a decision-making model theory of values, suggest the key variables in the decision-making process, and note some starting points for further research and analysis. Out of this analysis, I suggest the heuristic importance of a theory of values based upon their use by individuals as a part of decision-making. The primary advantage of this theoretical perspective is the focus on the individual use of values. This approach takes the study of values beyond the mere presence of values

in decision-making toward a start in understanding the intervening variables of the decision-making process.

To fully understand how values relate to human judgment and action, their definition must interface with those of beliefs and attitudes. Values, along with beliefs and attitudes, are fundamental judgmental, affective, and cognitive variables. Combined in various ways, they have the potential of shaping judgments and actions.

Beliefs are measures of certainty; they refer to, and account for, the probability or percentage of conviction exhibited by individuals. They are measures of "a disposibion to endorse rather than deny an idea."[8] They account for attitude strength and the centrality of values in the total individual value system. They serve as predisposing conceptions based on the probabilistic nature of objects, situations, or events.

Attitudes are predisposing preferences expressed positively or negatively as likes or dislikes. They serve the individual in the evaluation of objects and situations.[9]

Values are predisposing conceptions of the desirable, hierarchically ordered, situationally salient, internalized normatively through peer expectations, and centrally located in the composite human judgmental system. They are normative ideals socially created and inculcated to reflect ideal, end-states and instrumental means for achieving these end-states. The primary function of values is the systematizing of the total conceptual-evaluative system. Kenneth Boulding notes this function: "Any revision of the image of fact inevitably produces strains on the image of value, and so does the verbal presentation of a contrary image of value. We are revising our value images all the time, therefore, under the pressure of these strains."[10] Values are structured into a hierarchic system. The

value system, reflecting priorities of end-states and instrumental means, influences the concomitant beliefs and attitudes. The application of this hierarchy of values "constitutes a network in which certain items are selected and others passed over or rejected."[11] Rather than subsuming beliefs and attitudes, values, as normative ideals, reciprocally interrelate with these other variables. Thus, values shape and prioritize the entire conceptual-evaluative system. So interrelated are these variables that a change in one part creates the need to change other parts.[12]

Values are "incipient propositions."[13] Although they shape decisions, values "are not motives."[14] They serve normatively to suggest "oughts" but lack specific object and situational relevancy to be motives. They function to provide individuals with "a comprehensive set of standards to guide actions, justifications, judgments, and comparisons of self and others and to serve needs for adjustment, ego defense, and self-actualization."[15]

Values are an integral part of each individual's decision-making process and are part of the decision-making model applied in choice situations. As Robert Scott notes, "values describe the tendencies that govern choice."[16]

A decision-making model is a concept which assumes, at least, some margin of human choice within the context of peer influence, social conditioning, and unconscious behavior. The model accounts for the processes and variables which recurrently interrelate to shape judgment. The concept of a decision-making model postulates that individuals learn to determine what serve as facts and which facts should be relied upon. Theoretically, individuals prioritize and systematize such decision-making variables as reasoning, beliefs, attitudes, values, peer influence, intrapersonal needs, and situational exigencies and

constraints. Decision-making models reflect individual needs to seek a level of balance and well-being centered around the self-concept and level of self-esteem. Individuals acquire decision-making models through socialization, trial-and-error, and individual needs.

As we learn our values, we learn to use them to make decisions. We learn how to analyze the nature of situations, determine the behavioral expectations implied, and compare normatively our judgments and behavior with those of others.

The application of values in the mediational process of the decision-making model has at least three major reference points. These reference points are: (1) the self-conception, involving implications of adhering to, applying, and prioritizing certain values given the constraints of the other variables; (2) the perceived expectations of peer evaluation, which serve as social norms prescribing certain prioritization and application under the given constraints; and (3) the situational exigencies which pose risk, threat, and reward for the individual. Theodore Newcomb summarizes the interrelationship among these variables: "Each of us must somehow come to terms, simultaneously, with the other individuals and groups in our interpersonal environment, with the world that we have in common with those persons and groups, and with our own, intrapersonal demands and preferences."[17]

The decision-making model postulates a matrix effect among these variables whereby they interact to shape the responses. In sum, these variables are the individual's expectations of self under these circumstances balanced optimally to achieve internal satisfaction, peer expectations responded to normatively, and the exigencies posed by situations with which the individual seeks to cope.

The concept of decision-making models of behavior postulates that individuals respond in a calculating way in regard to the perceived rewards, risks, and threats posed by each situation. Central to the decision is the desire to protect the self, promote the self interest, and to cope with the situational exigencies. The decision-making model postulates that individuals systematically evaluate the situational exigencies and develop strategies which are most likely to produce the desired outcome with the situational constraints. This is a testable hypothesis the validity of which can be determined by posing situations demanding different value priorities and determining whether individuals do prioritize values to cope with the different situations.

The most provocative work on values has been done by Milton Rokeach. However, one factor which he has not explored is the situational variability of value priorities. His research has predominantly concentrated around the demographic variability of value priorities. He does not fully explore the use of values in choice situations and in decision-making; therefore, he does not consider the importance of situational applicability of values. Consequently, he fails to fully consider the possibility that individuals exhibit stable value hierarchies, not because of the constancey or importance of the values, but because the test situations eliciting responses do not vary and do not call for different prioritization. If values are used situationally, then rather than looking for universals among values, we can more profitably seek to understand how individuals use values to adapt to situational exigencies, to peer expectations, and to intrapersonal needs.

Research being conducted by the author of this paper suggests that situational adaptation seems to be based upon learned, socially

acquired normative expectations of desirable behavior and judgments in response to the constraints and exigencies posed by different situations. The basic question is whether value priorities change consonantly with the perceived expectations of situations.

The theoretical model presented in this paper, although reflecting basic similarities with Rokeach's, differs in one fundamental way. Rokeach's model of values assumes that the hierarchic order among the values in each individual's system is relatively stable. The postulate is that individuals will reflect the central priority and stability of their value system when confronted with choices. Thus, for instance Rokeach discovers that people who place equality high in their value system are likely to support civil rights organizations. Thus, individual action, according to this conception, moves outward from the central core of values and, as nearly as possible, remains consonant with the individual priority of values.

In contrast, my research suggests that values are used more flexibly and situationally than Rokeach observes. The situational priority is a response to attempts to achieve personal satisfaction by adopting a value structure which produces belief and behavioral outcomes most consonant with individual needs, peer expectations, and situational exigencies. Rather than being shaped deterministically by external social forces and showing no change or situational flexibility, my research suggests that individuals calculatingly use values as decision-making means of facilitating coping behavior.

The hypothesis of my study is: When individuals are confronted by choice in situations with markedly different exigencies, the priorities of the value systems projected to cope with the situation will be markedly different. To test this hypothesis, I asked subjects to project into situations of very different natures. In the dif-

ferent situations, as I had postulated, individuals prioritized values differently. My research results suggest that within the stability of a core of values, hierarchical flexibility exists according to the variables of learned decision-making models which serve to facilitate adaptive behavior.

The test group consisted of 200 undergraduate students who were randomly divided into five test groups. One group was a control group which did not receive a situational scenario. Instead, the subjects were expected to project their current value system.[18] The other four test groups were presented with four different scenarios: (1) One placed the individual into the role of working in a government agency assigned to suppress a protest movement, with force if necessary; (2) a second scenerio emphasized conditions of peace and prosperity; (3) the third posed an imminent threat of war against this nation by a foreign invader; and (4) the fourth placed the subject in a protest movement against the government with the purpose of seeking freedom and equality. The null hypothesis was: If individuals have an unchanging and essentially stable core of values which are prioritized without regard to situational exigencies then no difference will exist among the ranking of values in the individuals' systems, regardless of the perceived situational exigencies.

To measure the values systems, Rokeach's value test, Form D, was used, with one exception. On the terminal side, Inner Harmony was omitted, and Humanitarianism was substituted. This change was made to determine whether this key value would be an important measure of value response in these particular situations.

Responding under normal conditions, the control group placed the terminal values, freedom, happiness, self-respect, family security, and equality in the top positions. The hedonistic values of comfort, plea-

sure, and beauty were among the low priority values. So were salvation, an exciting life, and social recognition. Among the instrumental values honesty, responsibility, self-control, and independence were top priority. Low priority values were politeness, cleanliness, imagination, and obedience.

Some marked differences occurred between the group of subjects faced with the responsibility of controlling the protest movement and the control group. Peace was significantly higher ($t=5.687$) in the governmental group's priority; so was national security ($t=7.772$). Significant drops in priority occurred in comfort ($t=-3.131$), happiness ($t=-5.947$), mature love ($t=-5.149$), self-respect ($t=-2.882$), and friendship ($t=-3.824$). Apparently in a situation where one is assigned the responsibility of controlling others, security becomes more important and social relationships, brotherhood, and comfort diminish. Interestingly, equality and freedom showed no significant shift. Accomplishment ($t=-2.662 > .05$) declined suggesting that college students would not feel much accomplishment from controlling a protest movement aimed at achieving humanistic ends.

Interpersonal instrumental values declined: Cheerfulness ($t=-2.818$), forgiving ($t=-4.200$), and honesty ($t=-3.112$). The values of logic ($t=4.684$) and intellect ($t=3.579$) increased. These shifts suggest that the situation called for calculated astuteness and a decline in honesty and sympathy.

Differences between the control group and the group in the situation of peace and prosperity were minimal suggesting that most students see their situation as being peaceful and, at least, modestly prosperous. However, some difference did result. Freedom ($t=-4.267$) and self-respect ($t=-2.167 > .05$) declined while pleasure ($t=2.473$) and mature love ($t=4.589$) increased in importance. Obviously, implicit

in prosperity is a sense of loss of freedom and self-respect with a concomitant shift in pleasure and mature love, an appreciation for having a good time and solid interpersonal relationships.

Three instrumental values changed. A decline of importance occurred in being self-controlled (t=-5.577) while an increase in priority occurred in intellectual pursuits (t=4.255) and being cheerful (t=2.438 > .05). Self-control, a means for achieving prosperity, would decrease when that end-state was achieved. With peace and prosperity, the time and the means would be available to be intellectual and cheerful.

As was predicted, the greatest amount of variance occurred with the group confronted by the threat of war. Ten terminal values changed, and six instrumental values changed. Under conditions of imminent warfare, comfort (t=-3.690), a sense of accomplishment (t=-4.487), equality (t=-2.197 > .05), happiness (t=-3.771), mature love (t=-5.395), pleasure (t=-3.620), and self-respect (t=-7.183) declined. As ascetic, austere sense of values coupled with a decline in the importance of equality accompany conditions of national sacrifice in wartime. The largest increase in importance was evidenced by national security (t=12.549), peace (t=8.808), and social recognition (t=2.552 > .05). Ironically, family security, which was already high, did not significantly increase.

More instrumental values shifted under the war situation than was the case for any other situation. Courage (t=4.826), honesty (t=2.444 > .05), logic (t=2.762), and obedience (t=3.940) showed increases suggesting that under war conditions calculated, honest, and supportive behavior is expected. Consonantly, sacrifices in personal ambition (t=-2.965) and personal independence (t=-2.576 > .05) resulted. War conditions, the subjects reflect, call for loyalty, obedience, and

skilled calculation coupled with a loss of personal freedom and material comforts.

The protest conditions caused an increased importance in being humane and having interpersonal values: Peace ($t=5.392$), equality ($t=4.705$), freedom ($t=2.657 > .05$), humanitarianism ($t=3.771$), friendship ($t=2.658 > .05$), and social recognition ($t=5.215$). To achieve the ends of humanitarian equality, sacrifices would be made in personal comfort ($t=-3.455$), family security ($t=-4.628$), happiness ($t=-6.321$), pleasure ($t=-4.741$), salvation ($t=-2.091 > .05$), and self-respect ($t=-4.386$). People view protest movements as being exciting ($t=3.556$) and, contrary to some expectations, as being aimed at achieving national security ($t=2.745$).

Increases in instrumental values resulted for courage ($t=5.823$), intellectual skills ($t=4.759$), and obedience ($t=2.955$). These instrumental values serve to increase the effectiveness of the movement. Faced with support of a protest movement, subjects evidenced a willingness to sacrifice cleanliness ($t=-2.530 > .05$), the willingness to forgive ($t=-4.719$), the quality of loving ($t=-2.541 > .05$), and self-control ($t=-3.980$). These value shifts are not unlike those evidenced during the 1960 anti-war and civil rights protest movements. The instrumental value decreases show an intolerance for the enemy and an abandonment of self-control.

Additional significant differences among value priorities were revealed by one-factor analysis of variance. Although the results of this analysis are not as revealing of human judgment as are the t-test analyses above, these results additionally warrant rejection of the null hypothesis. Significant variance was found: Peace ($F=8.919$), equality ($F=2.859 > .05$), family security ($F=2.675 > .05$), happiness ($F=3.766$), mature love ($F=7.570$), national security ($F=11.094$),

pleasure (F=4.250), and self-respect (F=3.541). The instrumental values showed less variance, probably because the scenerios were not likely to demand different means, only different ends. Differences were discovered in courage ($F=3.226 > .05$) and self-control ($F=2.470 > .05$).

The results of this study suggest that individuals do erect a value priority designed to cope with situational exigencies. Thus, it cannot be assumed that values are stable nor that they are universally applicable in all situations.

If individuals can be shown to vary in their value priority according to the situational exigencies encountered, then we can more confidently suggest that they do apply a decision-making model and that they process and evaluate information. In fact, we can extend our conclusions to suggest that the three parts of the decision-making model are anchored in terms of self-protection of intrapersonal needs, peer approval, and the perceived threats, risks, and rewards in the situation. This study suggests that individuals reflect a decision-making process in which they prioritize values in preparation to cope and adjust within the situation.

As Karl Scheibe notes, "the operations of preference used to define values do not, in themselves, explain any behavior. Once values are determined by observing preference operations, however, they may be used to make behavioral predictions and thus may enter into explanations."[19] Affirming the notion that situations help frame the relevance of values, Scheibe observes that "salient beliefs and values ...are a product of the interaction between dispositions that the actor brings with him and the demands imposed by the situation."[20]

The decision-making model of values has several implications for rhetorical communication research and theory:

(1) The results of the study challenge the universality of the

rhetoric of identification. Contrary to McGuckin's notion that even the most thinly veiled appeals to identification are persuasive, substantial reason exists for suggesting that individuals respond to appeals, and select a hierarch, of values which meets the situational exigencies, their intrapersonal needs, and accords with peer expectations.[21] Individuals do not categorically respond blindly or emotionally to value appeals; rather, they use such appeals as part of their decision-making model.

In the decision-making process, the individual uses values as major premises and uses major premises which are expressive of values. Through this analysis the "individual looks at the situation in which he is involved. He appraises the social and physical objects in this situation in terms of their potential effect on the realization of his conception of the desirable."[22] And the individual evaluates the conception of the ideal in terms of the exigencies of the situation.

(2) Sermonic approaches to rhetorical influence need to be aware that not only values--specifically the content of values--but also intrapersonal needs, situational expectations, and normative enfluence are important variables in persuasive influence.

(3) Each hierarchy of individual values is flexible. Although each individual has certain core values which are of most importance in each value system, the individual priorities account for differences in translating values into action. As Rokeach notes, "self-cognitions can reasonably be represented at the innermost core of the total belief system, and all remaining beliefs, attitudes, and values can be conceived of as functionally organized around this innermost core."[23] In each situation the differences in individual priorities and needs will generate different hierarchies of values to facilitate coping behavior.

(4) Variables in the nature of values, such as change and hierarchy, take on new meaning. Centrality becomes an important measure of change or strength, meaning resistance to change in the individual priority system and the likelihood that a value will be used to shape and influence the priority of values in the system. Content becomes a measure of change and hierarchy. Content can refer to the meaning of a value, the application of a value within situational constraints, and the composite meaning of the system prioritized in a particular fashion.

Various approaches to values provide some insight. But some approaches fail to produce needed insight and research applicability. The sermonic approach fails to account for the variables of value appeals which produce persuasive effect. The use of values, according to the Burkean sense of identification, suggests persuasive effect; however, the theory fails to provide a full explanation why individuals, who have a variety of values in a prioritized system, respond to some values instead of others. A similar weakness exists in the theoretical perspective which assumes individuals as value types. Although certain individuals may have a prevailing top priority value, such as freedom or economic prosperity, other values serve in the value system and participate in the total valuation of situations and thereby shape choices. For instance, a person who has economic prosperity as the top value could concomitantly rank humanitarianism and equality high and use their acquired wealth for human ends. A different individual, with the same top priority, could rank equality and humanitarianism low and ruthlessly acquire wealth at the expense of others.

A theory of values built on the theoretical perspective of a sole value is probably inadequate. The most profitable position is con-

tained in the notion of values serving in a matrix of interrelated variables which in combination serve as a decision-making model with situational sensitivity.

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